CLAIM AMENDMENTS:

PENDING CLAIMS

Claims 1-15 (Canceled)

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): An apparatus comprising:

a first supply roll for paying out a first elongated continuous structure made of flexible material;

a second supply roll for paying out a second elongated continuous structure made of flexible material;

a joining station comprising means for joining a respective portion of [[a]] said first elongated continuous structure ~~made of flexible material~~ to a respective portion of [[a]] said second elongated continuous structure ~~made of flexible material~~;

a dancer assembly comprising a weighted dancer roller that is supported on a shaft which is freely vertically displaceable along a slotted support column, said second elongated continuous structure being wrapped under and around a portion of said dancer roller, said dancer assembly being located between said second supply roll and said joining station;

means for intermittently advancing said first elongated continuous structure along a first process pathway that passes through said joining station, each advance of said first elongated continuous structure being substantially the same distance and being separated in time by a dwell time, said joining means being operative during each dwell time;

first and second rollers forming a nip located downstream of said dancer assembly and upstream of said joining station;

means for guiding said second elongated continuous structure along a second process pathway, said second process pathway passing through said nip and said joining station, said first and second process pathways being mutually parallel downstream of said joining station; and

a torque control device for applying an output torque to said first roller in a direction opposite to the direction of a load torque exerted on said first roller when said second elongated continuous structure is being pulled by said advancing first elongated continuous structure, the output torque having a magnitude sufficient to produce a desired tension in that portion of said second elongated continuous structure disposed between said nip and said joining station.

Claim 17 (Original): The apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein the output torque is substantially constant during a work cycle.

Claim 18 (Original): The apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein said first elongated continuous structure comprises a web of packaging film while said second elongated continuous structure comprises a first zipper strip.

Claim 19 (Original): The apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein said torque control device comprises a magnetic particle clutch.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): The apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein said torque control device comprises an input shaft, an output shaft, and means for coupling said output shaft to said input shaft, said coupling means causing said output shaft to slip relative to said input shaft when a load torque on said output shaft exceeds an oppositely directed output torque being applied to said output shaft.

Claim 21 (Original): The apparatus as recited in claim 20, further comprising an accumulator that accumulates portions of said second elongated continuous structure disposed between said nip and said joining station while said first elongated continuous structure is stationary.

Claim 22 (Currently Amended): The apparatus as recited in claim [[22]] 18, wherein said first zipper strip is interlocked with a second zipper strip, further comprising an ultrasonic welding assembly that fuses and deforms respective portions of said first and second zipper strips that have passed through said nip.

Claim 23 (Original): The apparatus as recited in claim 22, further comprising a slider insertion device for inserting a respective slider on a respective undeformed section of said interlocked first and second zipper strips.

Claim 24 (Original): The apparatus as recited in claim 20, further comprising a thermoforming die for thermoforming a respective section of said first elongated continuous structure into a respective pocket before that section is joined to said second elongated continuous structure.

Claims 25-39 (Canceled)

Claim 40 (Currently Amended): An apparatus comprising:

a first supply roll for paying out a first elongated continuous structure made of flexible material;

a second supply roll for paying out a second elongated continuous structure made of flexible material;

a joining station comprising means for joining a respective portion of [[a]] said first elongated continuous structure ~~made of flexible material~~ to a respective portion of [[a]] said second elongated continuous structure ~~made of flexible material~~;

a dancer assembly comprising a weighted dancer roller that is supported on a shaft which is freely vertically displaceable along a slotted support column, said second elongated continuous structure being wrapped under and around a portion of said dancer roller, said dancer assembly being located between said second supply roll and said joining station;

a movable pulling mechanism that applies pressure for holding said first elongated continuous structure at a position downstream of said joining station, said pulling mechanism being intermittently movable for pulling said first elongated continuous structure along a first process pathway that passes through said joining station, each advance of said first elongated continuous structure being substantially the same distance and being separated in time by a dwell time, said joining means being operative during each dwell time;

first and second rollers forming a nip located downstream of said dancer assembly and upstream of said joining station;

means for guiding said second elongated continuous structure along a second process pathway, said second process pathway passing through said nip and said joining station, said nip applying a pressure on the portion of said second elongated continuous structure in frictional contact therewith; and

a torque control device for applying an output torque to said first roller in a direction opposite to the direction of a load torque exerted on said first roller by said second elongated continuous structure as the latter is being pulled toward said joining station by a portion of said advancing first elongated continuous structure disposed upstream of said joining station that has been joined to said second elongated continuous structure, the output torque having a magnitude sufficient to produce a desired tension in that portion of said second

elongated continuous structure disposed between said nip and said joining station.

Claim 41 (Previously Presented): The apparatus as recited in claim 40, wherein the output torque is substantially constant during a work cycle.

Claim 42 (Previously Presented): The apparatus as recited in claim 40, wherein said first elongated continuous structure comprises a web of packaging film while said second elongated continuous structure comprises a first zipper strip.

Claim 43 (Previously Presented): The apparatus as recited in claim 40, wherein said torque control device comprises a magnetic particle clutch.

Claim 44 (Previously Presented): The apparatus as recited in claim 40, wherein said torque control device comprises an input shaft, an output shaft, and means for coupling said output shaft to said input shaft, said coupling means causing said output shaft to slip relative to said input shaft when a load torque on said output shaft exceeds an oppositely directed output torque being applied to said output shaft.

Claim 45 (Previously Presented): The apparatus as recited in claim 44, further comprising an accumulator that accumulates portions of said second elongated continuous structure disposed between said nip and said joining station while said first elongated continuous structure is stationary.

Claim 46 (Previously Presented): The apparatus as recited in claim 42, wherein said first zipper strip is interlocked with a second zipper strip, further comprising an ultrasonic welding assembly that fuses and deforms respective portions of said first and second zipper strips that have passed through said nip.

Claim 47 (Previously Presented): The apparatus as recited in claim 46, further comprising a slider insertion device for inserting a respective slider on a respective undeformed section of said interlocked first and second zipper strips.

Claim 48 (Previously Presented): The apparatus as recited in claim 44, further comprising a thermoforming die for thermoforming a respective section of said first elongated continuous structure into a respective pocket before that section is joined to said second elongated continuous structure at said joining station.